

**Statement of Senator John McCain**  
**Commerce Committee Hearing on Sports Gambling and S.2267, the Amateur Sports Integrity Act**

Gambling on sports is a major concern. In recent years we have seen an alarming escalation in the number and complexity of point shaving schemes in college sports. Campus gambling is reaching epidemic proportions. A study released just yesterday highlights alarming statistics on gambling activities among college referees. Out of concern for this reality, The National Gambling Impact Study Commission recommended, among other things, closing the Las Vegas loophole that allows for legalized gambling on amateur athletics. The bill I introduced last week, The Amateur Sports Integrity Act, would do just that.

Opponents of this legislation argue that there is a distinction between legalized amateur sports gambling, and illegal sports gambling. The firm distinction they attempt to draw is one of convenience rather than reality. A report produced by the Treasury Department's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network entitled "Suspicious Activity Reporting and Casinos," discussed the various ways in which Las Vegas sports books are used to launder money. In several recent college sports point shaving schemes the Nevada sports books were used as an integral part of the overall game-fixing operations. And, beyond a doubt, the Vegas point spreads, published nationwide in newspapers, and on sports radio, serve to advertise, promote, and to facilitate illegal sports gambling. The Gambling Commission stated in its final report: "Legal sports wagering -- especially the publication in the media of Las Vegas and offshore - generated point spreads -- fuels a much larger amount of illegal sports wagering."

By closing the Vegas loophole and banning college sports gambling completely, we will end a practice that has objectified college athletes as items to be bet upon, exposing them to unwarranted pressure, bribery, and corruption. Ironically, the degree of this threat of corruption is best exemplified in the fact that Nevada, the only state where legal gambling on college sports occurs, has banned wagering on professional and amateur teams located within the state. Out of concern for the corrupting influence of sports gambling, one can go to Vegas and bet on any other team in the country, but not on any game where a Nevada team is playing.

In an increasingly jaded world, legalized gambling on college athletes sends the wrong message to America's youth. Collegiate competition serves as a laboratory classroom where young student athletes struggle to apply the highest ideals of the American character: courage in the face of adversity, discipline, teamwork and self-sacrifice. These ideals and lessons are of particular importance in today's society. They should not be reduced to a point spread and a spectacle for wagering.